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Oak Park Public Library awarded \$86,900 grant to digitize historical Ernest Hemingway archives
State funds will make rare items accessible to Oak Park students, scholars and the world

Oak Park, IL— The Oak Park Public Library will be able to offer unprecedented access to rare Ernest Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park and library archives thanks to a grant from the Illinois Secretary of State to digitize Illinois history. These items will be included in the Illinois Digital Archives, <http://idaillinois.org/>, which is open to everyone.

Jesse White Secretary of State and State Librarian awarded more than \$400,000 in digital imaging grants to support the creation and storage of digital collections across the state. Oak Park Public Library was the largest recipient of funds.

"This initiative is about opening access to—and learning with—these rare items," said Oak Park Public Library Executive Director David J. Seleb. Access to the Hemingway Archives has been available by appointment, typically for Hemingway scholars, with the collection spending most of its time housed in secure, museum-grade vaults at the Main Library.

"Hacking Hemingway: Cracking the Code to the Vault" will focus on Ernest Hemingway's life in Oak Park. It will cover his birth through young adulthood with an emphasis on his everyday experiences with family and friends His sister Marcelline's, mother Grace's, and Ernest's ephemera have been selected for digitization. The Foundation's Hemingway Archive serves as an informal "twin collection" to a collection housed in the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston. Items from the library's own Special Collections of Oak Park history will add rich context. The Historical Society of Oak Park-River Forest also has been invited to include materials that bring to life the Hemingway family's childhoods.

"We are thrilled to be able to share these Hemingway artifacts with researchers, scholars and Hemingway fans everywhere," said Ernest Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park Executive Director Allison Sansone. "These projects will coincide with the 2016 Hemingway International Conference to be held in Oak Park, making this a worldwide event."

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The library will also be partnering with Oak Park Elementary School District 97 on the development of a participatory, digital initiative that will provide students and teachers from Brooks Middle School with access to never-before-digitized Hemingway artifacts. This initiative, which is scheduled to begin during the 2015-2016 school year, will transform students and teachers into digital creators who will use the rare items from the archive in conjunction with project-based digital learning lessons that will offer a unique look at Hemingway, his local ties and his literary contributions.

“We are incredibly excited to be partnering with the library on this innovative program,” said Dr. Al Roberts, superintendent for District 97. “By bringing history to life in a fun and interesting way, Hacking Hemingway will help support instruction and promote learning, while also enhancing the educational experience for our students.”

Seleb said the careful work of digitizing these materials begins at the Main Library this month, with the first items available later this summer. “We are thrilled to lead this initiative, and are proud of the global and lasting effects this work will have. The library already receives calls from international literature and history scholars. This digitization initiative is a great opportunity for Oak Park, as well as for Hemingway scholars and fans around the world.”

About the Foundation

The Ernest Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park fosters understanding of the life and work of Ernest Hemingway, with emphasis on his Oak Park origins and his impact on world literature. This mission reflects the Foundation's belief in the importance of the written word and the value of thoughtful reading and writing. To learn more, visit ehfop.org.

About District 97

District 97 is the public elementary school district located in Oak Park, Illinois. The district has eight elementary schools and two middle schools, provides a well-rounded education to nearly 6,000 students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, and employs more than 800 highly qualified certified and non-certified staff members. Its vision is to be nationally recognized for preparing students to pursue college and career opportunities through purposeful and respectful learning experiences. To learn more, visit op97.org.

About Oak Park Public Library

Founded as a public library in 1903, the Oak Park Public Library engages with community and enhances the quality of life by providing opportunities for lifelong learning, by creating spaces and opportunities to connect, and by fostering a love of reading and commitment to literacy. To learn more, visit oppl.org.

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